NEWS AND COMMENT IN THE WORLD OF ART

By HENRY McBRIDE.

OVER two hundred drawings and prints have been placed on view in the Arden Gallery in an attempt to illustrate the evolution of French art from "Ingres and Delacroix to the latest modern manifestations." The latest modern manifestations are by Picasso, Matisse, Derain, Braque, Rivera, &c. In other words, this is an attempt to justify modern art.

Will it succeed?

Comme ci, comme ça.

It will convince those already convinced. It will leave those opposed exactly as they were before.

The collection is an intimate one, a thing of shreds and patches. I hope the simile is a correct one, that shreds and patches are "intimate." Certainly the collection is. It is made up throughout of the sort of things that one finds in artists' portfolios, scrappy treasures that mean a great deal to the artist and may or may not mean much to the outsider.

It scarcely seems worth while therefore to let oneself get heated over the arguments the show will provoke, for if it doesn't prove that Matisse, Derain and Braque are French, then Matisse, Derain and Braque will have to be proved French in some other way, since they are French. If it doesn't prove that De Segonzac and Marie Laurencin are in direct line of spiritual descent from Ingres at least it proves sufficiently clearly that there were tendencies to forget the literal facts in Miss Laurencin's distinguished predecessors. All but the most prejudiced must admit that such tendencies appear in the earliest records of art. Those who are prejudiced say that these abstractions by the early masters are their "failures."

Those who don't feel like proving something and are willing to take the exhibition like any other, will have a good time with it. The French have owned Art in modern times, and whatever forms their expressions take they remain essentially Gallic. There is always plasticity, liveliness and freedom from self-consciousness. Where this last quality comes in, as in the cases of Matisse and Picasso, then the art is least French. It is difficult to see, however, how Matisse and Picasso could have avoided this taint, since practically all of their existence has been passed in shop windows. They never had a moment's privacy in which to indulge in the luxury of making a few mistakes, so how could they grow to the dimensions of Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin, who didn't have to be masters until after they were dead?

But in advance of taking Matisse's measure—which cannot be done until his career has ended—it must be again insisted in these columns that the modern school, in which he is a leading figure, is highly significant, and it is only too easy to match up the achievements of modern art with the achievements of modern life. There is so close a parallel that all the criticisms that may be made against this art may be transferred to criticisms upon society. Art held the mirror up to nature in Shakespeare's time, to-day it mirrors souls.

"But why not make beautiful pictures?" said the lady.

"Why not make life beautiful?" said he.

"But the harm such things are doing! They seem to teach that study and work are not necessary for artists. Our young students will be ruined."

"At any rate they won't work. Nobody will work in these days, at least at drudgery. You see that everywhere. The housemaids are not the only class that's in revolt. If there ever comes a time again when the masses will work we will look back on the arts of this period as exactly in line with the other conditions, and be sure they will seize upon these very drawings that now shock you as the illustrations most suited to the argument. I suspect that what shocks you in them is their truth."

"Well, if life is so ugly, why can't the artist shut his eyes and pretend?"

"What good would that do? We write history with our art whether we like it or not. The true state of society, with its desire to have everything and unwillingness to pay anything, would be there between the lines no matter how outwardly hypocritical our artists might try to be."

"But Whistler, who was open minded enough, would have detested these things, I'm sure!"

"Whistler couldn't have appreciated the truths of to-day any more than Ruskin could have appreciated the Whistlerian truths of a generation ago. Ruskin was open minded too, but he was afraid of Whistler just as much as you are afraid of Matisse and Toulouse-Lautrec. Now that it is all over and become history we can see that Ruskin was needlessly fussy. The heavens didn't fall even if Jimmy Whistler's star was pinned into the constellation of impressionists. When another generation passes it may not have given as good a place to Matisse as to Whistler, but at least it will make it seem absurd that we were ever afraid of him. There is no use ever in being afraid of an artist."

"But I am afraid of him. He seems to destroy so much."

"He destroys nothing. He disproves neither nature nor Rembrandt. However, if you must combat him, the way to do it is not with talk, but with pictures. Paint something better than he does."

And the argument ended, as most arguments do, with both parties thinking as they began.

The exhibition begins chronologically with some portrait lithographs by Ingres, and an impression of the only etching he is known to have made. There are some spirited prints by Delacroix, drawings and etchings by Corot, drawings and prints by Daumier, Guys, Courbet, Degas, Serret, Manet, Renoir Cezanne, Gauguin, Redon, Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri Rousseau, and the "latest manifestations" that have been referred to.

Mr. de Zayas, who is responsible for the exhibition, has written the following note for the catalogue:

"The great innovation in the history of modern art has been made by the French art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the beginning of the nineteenth century French art was moulded by the canons of Greek and Roman sculpture. But breaking away, consciously and definitely, from the ritualistic expressions of antiquity, it turned to a direct vision of nature and proceeded simultaneously along two roads: by the first, studying form as it exists objectively, static, measurable, in itself; by the other, studying form as it exists subjectively, in the image and not in the thing, dynamic in its impact on the mind. These two tendencies, recognizable in the beginning in the so-called classicism of Ingres and romanticism of Delacroix, have continued, sometimes separately, sometimes in combination, always developing, down to the latest manifestations of modern French art.

"From the practice of painting with the artist's own eye on the object, as we see it in the case of Ingres, derives the realistic tendency. From Delacroix derives the study of form as it appears in the image of the object and not in the object itself, a form which is discoverable only by introspection; and from this, in turn, derives the tendency to the so-called distortion of form. For just as the conventions of antiquity had repressed the artist's free expression of objective reality so in turn realism came to repress the free expression of subjective form; and the form of the mental image was finally recognized as in no way necessarily corresponding to the form of the thing as it exists objectively.

"The consequent discovery of new forms was immensely aided by the study of certain primitive painters such as Greco, as we can see in the work of Cezanne, and by the study, as we can see in the work of Matisse and Picasso, of the art of certain primitive races, such as the sculpture of the African negroes. The free expression of subjective form which these primitive races were unable to give by reason of their very lack of critical self-consciousness and scientific knowledge, became self-consciously, one of the most potent factors in the delivery of the modern artist from the tyranny of objective representation.

"In the work of certain of the so-called cubists it is not a visual image but a conceptual image which is reproduced, the image not of a thing seen but of a thing thought.

"The latest tendency appears to mingle objective and subjective forms into a new synthesis."

La Belle Irlandaise, by Courbet. Centenary Exhibition, Metropolitan Museum.

Only Etching by Ingres. Evolution of French Art. Arden Gallery.

Monet's Latest Works at Durand-Ruel's

The Durand-Ruel Galleries have placed on view a group of paintings by Claude Monet, the great leader of the impressionists, that range in date from 1881 to 1918. One of the canvases belongs to the famous series of studies of Waterloo Bridge made by the artist from the windows of the Savoy Hotel and shows the river wrapped in mists and much more cobalt than any Englishman ever saw in it.

The three latest works are large pictures, glimpses of Monet's garden at Giverny. The style of painting in them is very broad, so much so that there would be little incongruity now in placing Monet in with the cubists. He almost dispenses with the subject, but not quite. The artist's pond of water lillies is now so well known to the world in general that almost any shorthand transscription from it would be understood. These studies, however, have harmonies of rich color and a rugged decorative charm.

The interest the public takes in the latest works of Renoir and Monet ought to reassure those painters who have reached the midway in their lives and careers and who sometimes fear that they will no longer be able to produce. Old age has its qualities as well as youth and instances are rare in art in which the painter who has once won his public, loses it. Age may blur the eyes somewhat and prevent the study of details, but a compensating breadth of view arrives in which details would be out of place anyway. Besides, the public grows old along with the artist. It is the new people, and the new people only, who take up with the new schools.

One of these landscapes, date 1896, shows the "Inundation of Giverny." It is but a sketch, yet it is a tour de force just the same, the willow trunks sticking up out of the water being laid in broadly and with astonishing sureness. Another of the canvases shows the water lily pond with Monet's eyes of 1905, when he was able so to command values that he made the smooth waters lie as flat as a mirror and spotted his pink lilies over it in an attractive pattern.

Pictures by Moffat at Kingore Galleries

Curtis Moffat, whose exhibition has just opened at the Kingore Galleries belongs to the group that was emancipated by the Ballet Russe. At least it seems sure that his bent for the fantastic and the unexpected received an impetus from the Russians.

Mr. Moffat paints a group of nuns who are going through rhythmic motions on the sward after the style of Isadora while the mountains in the background make obeisances either of respect or modesty. Mr. Moffat paints strange bathers, strange circuses, strange tropical landscapes. Everything this artist does is strange, but not for that reason essentially disagreeable.

Mr. Moffat puts a mountain in a picture in which some foreground nudes are making strange objurations, so that it has the colors and transparency of amethysts and topazes. Most people who have fixed ideas, not of the way mountains look, for they don't look at them enough to have ideas on the subject, but of the way they have seen them portrayed in other pictures, will be shocked to think Mr. Moffat has made mountains transparent.

But the other day there seemed to be a dancing class for tiny girls going on in the same building with the Kingore Galleries, and these gay young persons, who flocked into the gallery during rests, were perfectly unalarmed not only by the transparent mountains but by the pleasant weirdness of Mr. Moffat's colors. Perhaps nature to them looks weird too. But at all events they were not alarmed by the pictures and went away saying, "I love this one" and "I love that."

To the grownups who fear fantasy and playfulness and novel colors, and above all transparent mountains, it might be recommended that they take along the junior members of the family when they go to see this show and pattern themselves, if they can, after the mental flexibility of the young people.

They might also fortify themselves with these phrases of Arthur Jerome Eddy, who wrote them in an essay on cubism:

"Our appreciation of art will never be true until we can gaze with unprejudiced eye upon any combination of lines and colors the artist chooses to use.

"So long as we demand that he shall use only those combinations we are accustomed to just so long do we by our attitude check his development.

"From the painting of color harmonies and line harmonies it is but a step to insist that line and color composition may be used like sound composition to express one's moods and emotions.

"Why not accept at their face value all pictures that are beautiful in line and color, without bothering about their meaning? Perhaps they have no meaning beyond the vagrant fancy of the artist.

"To rightly view a work of art is an act of creation, the true observer is a painter; the true reader is a poet."

Notes and Activities in Art World

Twenty ateliers beneath the Beaux Arts in the Latin Quarter of Paris are open again with the khaki of the A. E. F. dominating the studios presided over by the most distinguished architects, painters and sculptors in France. For nearly five years the ateliers have been closed, as all the students and most of the masters donned the light blue and went to the front. No one knew when the arts would again hold sway, or who would remain to study or to teach.

Certain far seeing men serving with the American Expeditionary Forces and who were interested in education and the arts, even in the days when every ounce of effort and power were being expended to keep the Boche from Paris, looked ahead to the day when the universities and studios might be reopened. They planned to the end that those young Americans who had come to France to fight might have the advantages of study in Europe when fighting ceased, provided they were qualified and interested.

A group of educators in the Y. M. C. A. service, headed by Prof. John Erskine of Columbia University, cooperating with other educators who were administering the University Union—a university club set down in Paris to serve American university men among our expeditionary forces—made the preliminary arrangements with the French schools. Arrangements were also made with the army so that not long after the signing of the armistice it was made possible to detach those soldiers who wished to attend school in Paris, allowing them to pursue their studies while still carried on the army rolls.

The Y. M. C. A. also made arrangements to certify to the fitness for entrance. An extremely rigid examination has been the rule of the ateliers before they would accept a student, but it was arranged to have this relaxed in favor of members of the American Expeditionary Forces. There are now forty American students in the studio of Laloux and many in other ateliers. The Y. M. C. A. also served in assisting the students to find suitable living quarters in Paris within reach of their pocketbooks.

The atelier of Laloux is located at 8 Rue d'Assas and is as dingy and ancient as it is famous. The entrance is through a maze of stone corridors the flaggings of which have been worn by the feet of the students of many generations. In the half dozen dingy rooms on the top floor where the two score men in khaki are now laboring more famed architects have worked than at any other spot in the world. The rules require that they spend thirty-seven hours a week over their drawing boards, and most of them put in more than that on the problems assigned them.

The instruction work is under the direction of M. Thomas, who is in charge when M. Laloux is absent. M. Thomas was but recently demobilized from the French army, where he served as a private. He is assisted by Fred R. Lear of the Y. M. C. A., who was connected with the department of architecture of Syracuse University.

The American students at first did not understand the French method of instruction, which is to give the student a problem and leave him to his own devices. The Americans at first expected directions as to how to proceed, but finally learned to plunge ahead for themselves, the function of the teacher being to criticise and not to guide. Thus are originality, resourcefulness and confidence developed.

The current exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum includes twenty-eight pieces of artistic glass designed and produced by the celebrated French jeweller René Lalique. This glass was unknown in the United States until the San Francisco Exposition of 1915, and has rarely been seen in this country since that date. The exhibits include, in addition to the vases, among which is a very beautiful one designed for a night light, necklaces, bonbonnières, powder boxes, paper weights, seals and small statuettes. Lalique has produced glass of wholly original character, and the most beautiful so far known to modern times. Its beauty depends upon form and design more than upon color, which is very frequently that of clear glass, but also occasionally of a light copper colored stain which is said to be a form of enamel. The pieces are generally cast in the mould by the cire-perdue process and subsequently carved and cut on the wheel. The composition of the glass has been achieved after many years of experiment and is so far a secret of Lalique, who personally designs all the drawings and patterns. The exhibits at the Brooklyn Museum are lent by the artist.

In the Mrs. St. John Alexander Exhibition Galleries there is at present on view besides some modern paintings a collection of objects of art that includes bits of old copper, glass, pewter, odd tables, lace and the thousand and one things that assemble in old curiosity shops. A set of chairs that are notable in this collection were made in the early American days, after the designs of certain chairs in the Petit Trianon, and the brocades of which were copied from damasks that had been worn as gowns by Marie Antoinette.

In the cellar of the building, in a gallery known as the "Crypt," are a number of carvings in stone and some old paintings of decorative interest. One of these that is attributed to Giorgio Vasari is an interesting picture of the Christ.

The curator of prints in the Metropolitan Museum, W. M. Ivins, Jr., will give a series of talks on prints each Thursday at the museum until May 29. The talks are informal in nature, and, in order that the largest number of people may be interested, will, so far as possible, avoid discussion of or reference to the technical aspects of print making. The idea of the series is to bring out in conversational form the importance of prints as pictures rather than as etchings or engravings and to show their great interest as records of human life and thought.

The titles of the several talks yet to be given are:

May 8, Interesting vs. Beautiful; 15, The Mirror of Life; 22, Art in Life; 29, What of it all? Each talk will last about forty minutes, and it is hoped that after it is finished there may be a general conversation on the topics that have been discussed.

From a correspondent in Paris it is learned that Charles Hoffbauer, the French painter, who is well known to Americans and was recently decorated with the Legion of Honor, will sail for New York in the near future. The purpose of his voyage is to finish the mural decoration of the Confederate Memorial Institute in Richmond, Va., which was left uncompleted by the artist when he answered the call of his country in August, 1914.

M. Hoffbauer returned to France on the Sant' Anna, the second ship of French reservists leaving New York. He was at that time a territorial, but on arriving in France volunteered into the Active and served in the infantry until 1915, when he was ordered on the art commission of the Musée de l'Armée. After three months of this service he again volunteered into the Active and was demobilized with the grade of sergeant. Incidentally such a record would have brought at least a Captaincy in the American Army, especially when we remember that the Croix de Guerre was won during this period.

The decorations in Richmond's Confederate Institute, Thomas J. Ryan's magnificent gift, are about three-fourths on the way, the writer being among a half dozen people who have had the privilege of seeing them. Luminous color and a grandiose but simple scheme of decoration, which many Americans will remember in Hoffbauer's Luxembourg picture (painted at 21 years of age) are expressed with even greater freedom in the Richmond work—a more mature freedom. Its sincerity of atmosphere and type are not surprising since M. Hoffbauer, always the student, lived for a year in Virginia, taking in the South from every viewpoint before touching his brush to a wall.

And now this painter, the only military painter of the day capable of such a work, is going back to Richmond, after four years of active service to complete it. That his rich experience, kindly crowned by fate with such a possibility, should be invaluable is plainly indicated.

New York art critics have called attention to the recent examples of modern painting that Lithuania has shown at its annual exhibits in Vilnius, Lithuania. This small Baltic nation, which is seeking to have its independence acknowledged by the world, has developed a new school of art which is peculiar and refreshing in its poignant nationalism.

Artists are still at work on the British front. The Canadians have sent out to Germany Prof. W. Rothenstein, who is now in the Cologne-Bonn district, and also Private D. S. Milne, the remarkable young American they discovered in one of their Welsh camps. Other artists painting for them whose work is not to be seen at Burlington House are Major Orpen and William Nicholson. D. Y. Cameron is home now. The Canadian Memorial Exhibition, which has closed at the Royal Academy of London, is to go to New York.

The most remarkable thing, writes "Dry Point" in the *Weekly Despatch* of London, at the exhibition of the National Portrait Society at Grosvenor Gallery is the disappointing character of the Sargent picture, "Mrs. Allhusen." I sat looking at the sombre Walter Sickert, "Le Vieux Modele," on one side of it, and the fine portrait of W. H. Davies, the poet, by Augustus John, on the other, and I thought how cunning the hanging had been to place this flashy, mediocre portrait between them so as to set them off. I was amazed to find that it was a Sargent.

Courtesan, James I. Period. Drawing by Purcell Jones.

Figures by Picasso. Evolution of French Art, Arden Gallery.